



RAINBOW GARDEN

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Scripture Union USA: PO Box 987 #1, Valley Forge, PA 19482
CANADA: 1885 Clements Road Unit 226, Pickering ON L1W 3V4

Adaptation: Rose-Mae Carvin
Cover Illustration: Kathy Harmon Illustrator: Frances H. Hertzler
Proofreaders: Dr Barry Keiser, Jean Keiser
PowerPoint Presentation, Interface and Download: Mark and LaRue Bowser
Typesetting and Layout: Patricia Pope

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Phone: (717) 859-1131 www.biblevisuals.org

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Chapter 1



Show Illustration #1

Elaine sat at the table with a puzzled frown on her face. She had seen a Bible in the church she sometimes attended in the big city. But never before had she seen one on the supper table. Surely the father was not going to read from that dull, uninteresting book while all the family sat at the table and listened. But this is exactly what the father did.

What kind of place is this my mother has sent me to? Elaine thought. It is bad enough leaving the big city to live in this awful lonely country with its big, open spaces without having to live with a foolish family. Well, I just won't listen!

Instead of listening to the Bible reading, Elaine studied each member of this family where she was to live for at least a year while her mother went to Europe.

There was Mr. Owen, the father, a tall man with kind eyes. And Mrs. Owen, whose face always seemed to be smiling. Her eyes were dark and her hair curly. *How can she smile with all these children to take care of?* Elaine wondered.

Around the table sat Peter the oldest, and Janet who was ten and just a few months younger than Elaine. Next came the three little steps, Johnny and Frances and Robin, each just a wee bit taller than the other. In her carriage close by lay baby Lucy, blue-eyed and dimpled. To Elaine, who never had lived with other children, this large family was terrifying. And the big, ugly dog who tried to make friends with her—he was the most frightening thing about the whole place!

Mr. Owen went on reading the Bible and Elaine finally realized he was reading something about a vine and its branches. Then the last verse caught her attention: "These things have I spoken unto you . . . that your joy might be full."

Elaine liked the sound of those words. She repeated them over and over in her mind as the family bowed their heads and Mr. Owen prayed.

Of all the silly things, thought Elaine. Praying is for churches, not for tables. It is a good idea to say the Lord's Prayer before going to sleep at night. But this is very silly.



Show Illustration #2

Yet Elaine observed that Mr. Owen was not praying as the minister did in church. This was different. Mr. Owen prayed as if he knew God very well—as if God was right there. It was all very puzzling to the little girl from the big city who had come to live with this family in the country. She was glad when the Bible reading and prayer were finished.

"Did you enjoy family worship?" Janet asked. Without waiting for an answer she continued, "I'll show you where you are to sleep, Elaine. You and I are to share my room. Won't that be fun?"

Elaine did not think this would be fun at all. She was used to having her own room all to herself. In fact she was used to having almost everything to herself. She knew little about sharing anything. Elaine was a very selfish little girl.

When Janet led Elaine into the room they were to share, Elaine said nothing. Yet her face showed only too well how awful she thought it was. True, everything was clean and neat. But it was not at all like the frilly little room she had in the city.



Show Illustration #3

When she saw some sticky candy and withered flowers on her pillow she snatched them and tossed them in the waste basket.

Janet shot an angry glance at Elaine. "I am glad my little sister didn't see you do that," she said, her voice shaking. "She wanted to do something nice for you and make you feel you were welcome. Now I am not so sure you are." And Janet ran quickly from the room.

Elaine looked surprised. She thought the candy and flowers were trash someone had carelessly left on her pillow. She was thoughtless and selfish. But she was not cruel. *Which one of the little sisters was it?* she thought. *I hope she doesn't find out about this.*